

# **Blood Meridian, or the Evening Redness in the West Study Guide**

**Blood Meridian, or the Evening Redness in the West  
by Cormac McCarthy**

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## Plot Summary

*Blood Meridian* follows a teenager, known only as the "kid", as he runs from his home in Tennessee and finds himself in Texas, a member of a renegade unit of the army still intent on fighting the Mexican War. After entering Texas, this unit is ambushed by Indians and massacred. He then joins the Glanton Gang to avoid jail time and finds himself linked with a dark man he has met before, Judge Holden. What follows is a dark, violent story about the west that will leave its readers stunned by its gory conclusion.

At fourteen, the kid runs away from home and finds himself in Texas where, after some trouble that has him running from the law, the kid joins up with a renegade unit of the army still intent on fighting the Mexican War. However, once in Mexico, the kid's army unit is massacred, leaving behind only a few survivors. The kid begins to wander in the desert, unharmed but desperate for water, and is joined by a badly wounded member of the army unit. The two wander the desert for several days before the other man's injuries force him to stay behind. The kid finds civilization but is quickly put in jail for past offenses. Once there, he finds himself reacquainted with a man he has met before. This man arranges for him, the kid, and another man to join the Glanton Gang, under contract with the governor to kill Indians and to track down a man named Gomez.

The kid travels with this gang for many weeks, moving from village to village, often traveling in the desolation of the desert. On the few occasions when the group stays in a village, a child mysteriously goes missing during their visit. There is also a moment when they attack a village of Indians thinking they have found Gomez, but they soon learn they were wrong. They are a violent group. Upon return to Chihuahua City to collect their due for scalps collected, the gang violently tears up the town. Afterward, they go on a killing spree so heinous that the governor cancels their contract and puts out a warrant for Glanton. Glanton does not worry about this. Instead, he gets another contract with the Sonora governor.

The Glanton gang comes across a settlement in which a doctor is running a ferry service across the river. The gang convinces the doctor he is in danger from the local Indians and takes over the service for him. They run the service as a way to steal from travelers. However, the Indians teamed up with the Glanton gang to stage a fake attack on the landing to encourage the current owner of the ferry to give it up. Several Indians die during this attack, causing the survivors to feel angry and betrayed. At dawn one morning, the Indians attack the gang and kill everyone except for the Judge, the kid, Toadvine, and the ex-priest, as well as two men who were not at the camp at the time. The Judge attempts to get the kid to travel with him or give him his gun, but the kid resists. The Judge follows the kid's tracks, as he travels with the ex-priest and attempts to kill him but fails. Weeks later, the kid and the ex-priest arrive in California, just in time to see two of their fellow survivors hung.

The kid spends the next thirty years traveling around, making a transient living. One day, he finds himself in the same town as the Judge, whom he has not seen since the



Glanton gang's massacre. The kid and the Judge talk in the bar for a few minutes, and then the kid goes off to enjoy a dance being thrown in the back room of the bar. When the kid goes to use the outhouse, he runs into the Judge and is brutally murdered.



# Chapter 1

## Chapter 1 Summary

*Blood Meridian* follows a teenager known only as the kid as he runs from his home in Tennessee and finds himself in Texas, a member of a renegade unit of the army still intent on fighting the Mexican War. After entering Texas, this unit is ambushed by Indians and massacred. The kid then joins the Glanton Gang to avoid jail time and finds himself linked with a dark man he has met before, Judge Holden. What follows is a dark, violent story about the west that will leave its readers stunned by its gory conclusion.

The kid is born in Tennessee. His mother dies during childbirth, and the father has buried his grief in alcohol, ignoring the child and never talking about the mother. The kid runs away when he is fourteen. The kid travels through Tennessee to St. Louis to New Orleans, where he is shot in the back by a Maltese boatswain in a tavern. The tavern keeper's wife cares for his wounds, but the kid has no money to pay her. So, he sneaks away in the middle of the night. The kid boards a boat bound for Texas and takes odd jobs, until he makes his way to Nacogdoches.

The kid slips into a revival tent during a rain storm for shelter, rather than to listen to the preacher. A man walks into the tent after the kid. He has no hair, not even eyebrows, and he walks up to the pulpit to address the congregation. This man says that the preacher is an imposter, that he cannot even read the words he preaches, and that he is wanted in four states for various offenses, including the rape of a young girl. The bald man also accused the preacher of having relations with a goat at the same time the preacher is accusing him of being the devil. The kid and a fellow standing beside him slip out of the tent through a split in the seam the fellow made with his knife. By the time the kid and his new friend reach the tavern, the bald man is already at the bar. The bald man, whom the bartender called the Judge, bought them all a round of drinks. When asked how he knew all of that about the preacher, the Judge admitted to making the whole thing up.

A couple of days later, the kid is in the same tavern alone. It has been raining sixteen days and the streets are pure sheets of mud. The kid attempts to cross one of the boards that have been laid out for crossing the streets and comes face to face with another man. Neither wants to turn or to step off the board, so they begin to fight. A group of men surround the fighters to watch. Another man comes up behind the kid and knocks him out with a club. When the kid wakes the next morning, he finds that he has been robbed. The man the kid had fought was still there. They took a minute to collect the man's things and then the kid went with him to the hotel. There the kid followed when the man asked for a man named Old Sidney. The kid learns the man's name is Toadvine, as the clerk calls to him to warn him that Old Sidney will kill him. Upstairs, Toadvine stops outside a door, lights a small fire, and pushes it under the door. A moment later, the door is opened by a man in his underwear. Toadvine grabs the man,



drops him to the floor, and begins to jab his thumb into his eye. Toadvine instructs the kid to kick the man, so he does. The kid and Toadvine run out of the hotel, as the fire begins to spread across the top floor. The kid retrieves his mule and, as he leaves town, he sees people gathered around the hotel. One of them is the Judge, who watches him ride away.

## Chapter 1 Analysis

This chapter introduces the two main characters of the story, the unnamed protagonist who is referred to as the kid and the antagonist, Judge Holden. The kid is a teenager who has run away from home, because his father is so grief stricken by his mother's death that the father cannot deal with the kid. From home, the kid moves all over Tennessee to St. Louis, to New Orleans, and finally Texas. This shows strength of character in this young man who has survived on his own at fourteen. The kid is shot early in the story, but he takes it as though it is simply a part of living. This also opens the theme of survival, as it relates to the kid. The kid has just gone through something that would be devastating in modern times, and he walks away from it with a few scares and nothing more. The kid is also robbed later in the chapter. This introduces him to another character that foreshadows a time when the two characters will meet again. The kid helps this new character, Toadvine, beat up the man that is presumably behind this robbery, illustrating the character of not only Toadvine, but of the times in which the novel is set.

The introduction of the Judge begins with his lies about a preacher that causes a shoot out in a revival tent. This shows that the Judge is not afraid of controversy, nor does he have much of a conscience when it comes to other people and their welfare. It is also touches on the theme of evil, as the Judge's actions can be construed as evil. This foreshadows a time when the Judge will be revealed to be the perpetrator of other heinous crimes. When the kid rides out of town and the Judge watches him, this too suggests that the two characters will meet again. The plot will continue to develop, and they will interact in dangerous ways.



## Chapter 2

### Chapter 2 Summary

The kid travels on the back roads for a while, avoiding people except when he needs food. His mule has become so thin and sickly that he has become almost useless. The kid happens upon the home of a hermit, who takes him in and gives him dinner and a warm place to sleep. The hermit tells him he was once a slave runner but he got tired of the business and got out. In the middle of the night, the kid wakes with the hermit standing over him. The hermit moves, when he sees the kid is awake. The next morning, the hermit is gone, and the kid leaves. Late that afternoon, the kid sees dust in the distance. That night, he finds a small group of cattlemen sitting around their camp fire. The men invite the kid to join them. After the kid tells them he got robbed, the men give him a knife and a few other supplies before separating.

A few days later, the kid arrives in Bexar. He finds a tavern and tries to talk the owner into allowing him to work for a drink. They pretend not to understand him. The kid takes a broom and sweeps the entire bar, but the bartender will not give him a drink when he is done. The barman takes out a gun and gestures for the kid to leave. The kid knocks the gun out of the man's hand, jumps over the bar, and grabs several bottles of whiskey. The kid beats the barman with one bottle and its remnants and then takes the other bottle with him. The kid sleeps in an empty church after drinking most of the whiskey. The next morning, he wakes and drinks the last of the whiskey. When the kid steps outside, he finds his donkey gone. He follows the donkey's tracks, passing a black man who points him in the right direction. The kid finally finds his donkey standing by the river grazing. The kid ties the donkey to a tree and takes a bath.

### Chapter 2 Analysis

The kid travels on the back roads, presumably afraid of being arrested for the hotel fire. He runs into a hermit and a kind group of cattlemen who help him out by giving him a few supplies. This is a contrast to the men he meets in Bexar, a group of Mexican men who do not appear to speak or understand English. These men do not want to give out free drinks, even though the kid sweeps their entire bar for them. The kid gets into a fight with the barman, taking what he wants anyway, illustrating once more the time in which the novel is set and the type of violence that ruled this world, foreshadowing the violence that will present itself again and again as the plot continues to develop. This fight also foreshadows the following chapter in which a man who has heard of the fight takes an interest in the kid.





# Chapter 3

## Chapter 3 Summary

While lying under a tree drying from his bath, a man walks up and wants to talk to the kid. The man introduces himself as a sergeant in Captain White's company. Although the Mexican War has been over for almost a year, Captain White does not believe it is over and intends to continue fighting. The sergeant promises the kid they will give him a gun, some clothes, and the spoils of war if he will join. The kid agrees to meet with the captain. The captain tells the kid why he thinks it is important for them to continue to fight the Mexicans, mostly because of American life lost during the war, and because the captain does not seem to think highly of Mexicans. The captain then gives the kid a shirt and instructs the sergeant to provide him with a gun, a horse, and to sell his mule to buy him a saddle.

The sergeant takes the kid to the company's camp and introduces him to a few of the men. That evening, the kid rides into town with two other recruits. They sell the mule for a saddle, repairs to the kid's boots, and a small amount of money. The recruits then take the money to a tavern and drink it. In the tavern, a man says that what they are doing is wrong, and they will be stopped at the border. The next morning, after a rough night of drinking and fighting, the kid and one of the other recruits finds the third man dead in the courtyard.

## Chapter 3 Analysis

The most important elements of this chapter are the fact that the kid joins the army, and the fact that the company of the army he joins is one that believes it is still fighting a war that ended the year before. The kid joins the army, because he has lost all of his belongings and needs sanctuary from the crime he committed when he helped Toadvine burn down the hotel. This touches on the theme of survival, as the kid does these things for his own survival and protection. Captain White hires the kid, because he has heard he is tough and no friend to Mexicans. The captain has a problem with the Mexicans, due to the fact that so many of his friends and fellow soldiers died during the war. This is also the motivation on the part of the captain for continuing the war, even though the government has declared it finished. These motivations may be in vain, however, as a man warns the kid and his companions at the end of the chapter that their trip into Mexico is bound to end badly. This foreshadows the next few chapters, as the reader follows the kid into Mexico.



# Chapter 4

## Chapter 4 Summary

The kid and his company of filibusters start out toward Mexico. It is a foreign land to the kid, a bare, flat land with little vegetation or wildlife. They travel on horseback with their guns on their saddles before them, each man well armed. There is a supply wagon that travels behind them where they prepare and store the antelope meat from the game they killed. They travel before dawn and forgo a fire for six days, causing exhaustion among the men and the horses. Two men come down with cholera, one dies that same day. Another becomes ill the next day. They are placed in the supply wagon for the day's travel where they died. By the time they have been out ten days, four men have died. Two days later, they come upon a place where there are bones, cast-off clothes, and the skeletons of mules. They take to traveling at night, aware the bones mean Indians. Soon, the animals begin to suffer with a lack of food and water. They reach a place where there is electrical activity, and they pray for rain. It does rain, but the next day they are traveling through the heat with no water.

They come upon a hut in the middle of nowhere. The sergeant and two men enter the hut, where they find hot coals but no people. The captain orders the sergeant to look for food for the animals. The sergeant checks behind the hut and the stable, finding only a small creek. A few minutes later, some men find an old man who had been hiding in the stable, who appeared to be feeble. The captain told the sergeant to get rid of him. The company stays at the hut for the night and then move on in the morning, somewhat refreshed. They travel through a few abandoned villages, as they move deeper into Mexico. The next day, they see a puff of clouds in the distance and soon discover that it is a herd of animals, horses and cattle. The captain thinks it is stock thieves. They decide to stay put and confront the thieves, but the thieves move past them with the animals between. The sergeant tries to find the translator in case they need him, but he is nowhere to be found. A group of ponies behind the stock thieves began to make their way toward the soldiers. They are dressed in an odd assortment of clothing, wedding veils and silk finery. The soldiers realize they are Indians, and they are attacking. The soldiers are massacred in a most heinous manner.

## Chapter 4 Analysis

The kid starts out to Mexico, the description of the landscape already foreshadowing a difficult time for him and his army company. The landscape is described as bare of all vegetation and wildlife, barren and sandy. This makes the setting a part of the story, as the kid sets out on an adventure where his survival in this desert will be dependent on the land and the availability of water. It also touches again on the theme of survival for the same reasons. As the company begins to lose men to cholera this intensifies the idea of survival and impending death. The disease kills four men right away. These



deaths seem to foreshadow death for most of the other men as well, whether it is by the elements or the disease is still unknown.

Just when the kid and his company need food and water desperately, they come across a hut. The captain forces the owner of the hut to leave and then allows his men to partake in the food and water at their leisure, though there is very little fresh food. It seems the men's luck is changing. However, a few days later they come across what at first looks like a group of thieves but turns out to be Indians. Most readers who know about the history of the west know that Indian could be violent, so the appearance of the Indians cannot be a good sign, especially since earlier in the chapter in an act of foreshadowing the group passed some bones and castoff clothing that were clearly not left there for innocuous reasons. The massacre has been foreshadowed throughout the chapter and now comes to pass. Now, the foreshadowing asks the question whether or not the kid has survived and what will happen to him if he has.



# Chapter 5

## Chapter 5 Summary

After the Indians leave, the kid slips away on foot, as the horses have all been killed. The kid makes his way to some boulders and begins to climb, when he hears a voice from behind. Sproule, one of the other soldiers, has also survived the attack with seven others. Sproule's horse was injured, and the other men left him behind. His arm is badly wounded. Neither have any supplies, so they decide to head toward a rim rock, where Sproule thinks there are signs of life and possibly water. They find water and camp nearby for the night. The next morning they follow the tracks of the war party and come upon several mules that have been killed. A little further on, they come to a tree that has been decorated with the bodies of dead babies. Later, they cross through a village that has been destroyed, possibly by the same Indians. They stay the night there before moving on, continuing to follow the Indians and to find dead animals. That night, they sleep under a carreta and continue on the next morning. Sproule's arm has begun to smell. They start up a mountain, see a city far below, once reaching the summit. A group of men pass them on the path, the leader pausing to give them a drink from his canteen. During the night, Sproule is attacked by a bat, leaving him with gashes on his neck.

The next morning, they cross a dry wash where the kid digs in the sand for water. They both drink their fill and move on. Sproule is becoming weaker every day from his wounds. Sproule does not want to continue walking, but follows the kid for a lack of anything else to do. While following a road that has clearly been used by wagons, they come across a carreta being pulled by a mule. Inside are a couple of kids, a man, and a woman. Sproule and the kid get into the back of the cart and drink their fill of water before falling into an exhausted sleep. The kid wakes the next day and finds that Sproule has died. The kid gets out of the cart and begins to walk through the small village, when he is approached by some soldiers who accuse him of being a part of Captain White's company. They have Captain White's head in a jar. The kid is arrested and put into a stone corral with three other survivors of the company. All the other survivors have been killed. The kid and his companions are taken to Chihuahua City. In the jail where they are placed, the kid finds Toadvine amongst the other prisoners.

## Chapter 5 Analysis

The kid survives the Indian attack only to find himself without a horse or supplies in the middle of the Mexican desert. Another survivor comes upon him, but this survivor is in worst shape, having been abandoned by a larger group of survivors when his horse became injured. This foreshadows developments throughout the chapter in which the kid and his new companion must keep traveling in order to find supplies, water, and shelter. This illustrates the theme of survival as the kid keeps moving on despite his companion's worsening injuries and growing weak state. Again the setting is a character in the story, an antagonist that is determined to maim or kill the kid. The desert is a



terrible place to be lost without water. Even a group of bandits they pass seem to understand this, as they offer water. Finally, the kid and his companion find a ride and are taken into a nearby village where the kid discovers his companion dead of his wounds. However, it is not a sanctuary as the kid quickly discovers that the villagers and some local soldiers have already hunted down the other survivors of their company and killed many of them, including the captain, and have arrested the rest. The kid too is arrested. This foreshadows the next chapter that finds the kid in jail and reunited with Toadvine.



# Chapter 6

## Chapter 6 Summary

The next morning, the kid and Toadvine discuss the prison and the possibility of getting out of there, with Toadvine taking a special interest in a guard with brass teeth. Another man becomes friendly with them, a Kentuckian soldier who fought in the war and is back in Mexico looking for a woman he was forced to leave behind. Everyday the prisoners would be led out to the streets, where sympathetic people would give them tobacco and coins. One day, they see a group of men ride past, a vicious group who is well armed and looks as though they can take care of themselves. Among them is Judge Holden. They go to the governor's palace. Toadvine suggests he knows what is going on. The next day, the judge comes out and watches the prisoners. That night, Toadvine tells the kid and the Kentuckian that the group of men is Glanton's gang, and they have a contract with the governor to collect Indian scalps and the head of a man named Gomez. Toadvine has arranged for the three of them to join the gang, having told Glanton that they are experienced Indian killers. Three days later, they ride out with the gang.

## Chapter 6 Analysis

The reunion between the kid and Toadvine appears to be a good one. Toadvine and the kid discuss ways of escaping the jail when they see a group of rough looking men come into town. Among them is the same judge the kid met in Nacogdoches shortly before he met Toadvine, the same judge who lied about a pastor and got the man killed. This is not a good man and his presence with the gang is foreshadowing of more cruelty to come. Toadvine arranges for the kid, himself, and another man, the Kentuckian, to join this gang instead of spending the next few years in jail. This foreshadows the next group of chapters that deal with the gang and the kid's time in their company. It also foreshadows the development of the judge's character and the revelation of the depth of his cruelty.



# Chapter 7

## Chapter 7 Summary

In the gang, there are two men named Jackson, one white and one black, who do not get along with one another. The men received a shipment of new weapons and spend a majority of one their first mornings together testing them out. Glanton does not think they are worth the money being asked for them by a group of soldiers. The judge steps forward when a conflict begins to erupt and takes the sergeant aside, talks to him, then makes a show of introducing him to all the men. Then, the judge introduces the sergeant to the black Jackson, inventing a problematic career, stealing from history and literature. Jackson becomes upset by what the judge has said although he is not sure exactly what he said. The judge then takes the sergeant to the gate and pays him for the guns.

The party rides out that evening and makes camp, when it becomes dark. Toadvine, the kid, and the Kentuckian make their beds away from the others, as do a group of Delaware Indians. They watch the Indians. In the morning, they ride again. Toadvine makes friends with a man who is also missing his ears, like himself. They spend the day wagering on which Jackson would kill the other. That night, they camp in the corral of a hacienda that had been attacked by Apaches several weeks before. Glanton orders a goat killed for the men. The third day, they ride into the town of Carralitos, where they camp in the plaza. Glanton, the judge, and the Brown brothers dine with General Zuloaga that night. The next morning, they are approached by a family of magicians looking for safe passage to Janos. After watching them do a piece of their show, Glanton agrees. That night, they camp on a windy plateau. The men gather around a camp fire and Glanton asks the leader of the magician family if he tells fortunes. The man says he does. The man calls his wife and has her stand at a distance with a blindfold on. The man then approaches Glanton, but Glanton tells him to do it for the cowboys. The juggler then moves on to the black Jackson and pulls out a card, calling to his wife what is on the card. After saying the fortune, the woman guesses correctly the identity of the man whose fortune is being read. Jackson asks the judge what she said and is told to stay away from rum.

The juggler moves on to the judge and is directed to the kid. The juggler goes through the same routine and then calls out the card to his wife. The woman again guesses correctly the identity of the kid. The woman begins to chant, and the judge laughs. The kid stares at him and then tells the juggler to get away from him. Next, the judge directs the juggler to Glanton. Glanton takes a card like the others had but the card suddenly disappears as though Glanton does not like what he has seen. The woman begins to chant, and her words seem to tell about Glanton's death near a river. Glanton pulls a gun to try to stop the woman's chanting. The judge walks across the fire and grabs Glanton while someone else pulls the juggler and the old woman safely away. They ride out the next day, reaching Janos by mid afternoon. They ride into the town square, where the Delawares and Webster are sitting with an old Indian woman. Webster says



she was in a camp by the river and cannot walk. Glanton climbs down from his horse and takes the woman's scalp after shooting her in the head. They camp outside the town that night. The juggler and his family set up their tent in the town square, and Jackson joins their show for the night.

## Chapter 7 Analysis

Foreshadowing opens the chapter as the narrator tells the reader that there are two Jacksons in the group, one white, one black, and that they do not like each other. Later, the reader sees that there is betting going on over which Jackson will kill the other. This foreshadows a time later in the development of the plot in which one Jackson will kill the other. The chapter goes on to describe the movements of the group, as they move deeper into Mexico. Joining them is a magician family. This part is interesting, as it reveals more foreshadowing about the development of the plot. When the fortune tellers tell Jackson's fortune, the judge, who understands Spanish, refuses to tell Jackson the truth about his fortune, suggesting that the woman might have said something in regards to Jackson life expectancy or about the feud between him and the other Jackson. It is then the kid's turn. Throughout the time the old woman chants his fortune, the judge stares him down, amused by what he hears. The kid does not like it, and makes the juggler move on. This foreshadows a tension between the kid and the judge. It is then Glanton's turn. The woman seems to be predicting Glanton's death at a river. This foreshadows later chapters in which Glanton will come to several rivers and his possible death.

More interesting information comes out about the judge in this chapter. The narrator seems to compare him to a supernatural being as the judge walks through fire to keep Glanton from killing the fortune teller. Also interesting is that although Glanton is the clear leader of the gang, it seems that the judge is really in control. The judge chooses who will have their fortunes told and the judge is the peacekeeper, first when they buy guns that Glanton does not think are worth the price asked and again when he saves Glanton from killing the fortune teller. This sets up the dynamics of the gang and also reveals some of the judge's character traits, as well as Glanton's. Finally, when Glanton kills the old Indian woman, it again illustrates his character and the businesslike way he goes about murdering people, foreshadowing more violence and killings.





# Chapter 8

## Chapter 8 Summary

The kid, Toadvine, and Bathcat go to a cantina. They pool their money and buy a couple of drinks. A man walks in and asks if they are from Texas. The man knows they are looking for Gomez and tells them that they will pay a lot of money for him. The man then moans about all the blood shed in Mexico and worries over the fate of his country. All the while, another man in the corner moans and prays. Bathcat asks the bartender who the man is and learns he is his son and that he has been cut by one of the other card players. There is no where for him to go, so he continues to sit in the corner.

The gang rides out the next morning. They come across an Indian camp that has been sacked. Later, the judge comes and asks the kid and Toadvine where the Kentuckian has gone. They tell him they think he quit the night before. The next morning, a couple of the Delawares are gone but they ride on anyway. That night, they camp and the two Jacksons begin to argue. The white man has been hung-over the past two days and is in a bad mood. There are two camp fires. The white man warns the black man to stay away from his. When the black man approaches anyway, the white man pulls his gun. The black asks if he really means to shoot him. When it seems clear he does, the black man walks away. However, he returns a moment later and cuts the white man's head off with a Bowie knife. The other men move away and leave the body the next morning, when they ride on.

## Chapter 8 Analysis

Opposite to the situation in which the kid originally finds himself in Mexico, he is welcomed into Mexico by an ex-soldier who is relieved to find the Texans there to protect his people from the Indians. The Mexican talks about how his country is falling apart under all this blood shed, while, ironically, there is a man in the corner bleeding to death over a game of cards. Not only this, but the dying man's father is the bartender, and he does nothing to help the man. This touches on the theme of death in this novel. Death seems to be an everyday occurrence to these people, a fact of life. As if to underscore this fact, a few nights later the black Jackson kills the white Jackson for threatening to kill him over a place by one of two fires. This event has been foreshadowed since the Glanton gang came into the story and has been satisfied in a most gruesome way, again illustrating the theme of death/murder.



## Chapter 9

### Chapter 9 Summary

The gang is crossing a dry lake bed when Glanton stops. All at once, the Dakotas and Bathcat climb off their horses, lead them into some brush and hobble them. A group of archers appear on the lake bed. The gang had been about to walk into an ambush. The Indians ride toward the gang, shooting their arrows. When the gang fires back, they turn and vanish. One of the Indians lies dead on the lake bed. The judge cuts away the war bag and dumps it out on the sand. It held several gunflints, balls, a rosary, and an eye shield. The judge picks up a calculus and pockets it. Then, he cuts away the man's shorts and takes a small bag that is tied near the man's genitals. Finally, the judge cuts off the man's scalp.

The gang rides on, spending the day on gypsum, leaving them covered with dust at the end of the day. The next day, they are rejoined by the two Dakotas who left them outside of Janos. They have found the horse belonging to the veteran who deserted in Janos, with his belongings still on it. They burn the belongings and move on. The next day, they come up on a carriage, still attached to the running horses, and find several dead people inside. They continue to ride up into the mountains and make camp that night, entering a nearby caldera the next morning. They approach the old presidio, where Glanton bangs on the door and demands the occupants come out. Inside, they find several men and a small Mexican child. They were the remnants of a party who had set out to find gold and were now hiding from some Indians who had chased them from the desert. One of their men is injured and dying. Outside, the men have a horse that has been bit by a snake. It is also dying. However, the men will not shoot it, because it will rot.

The judge spends the afternoon exploring the area and giving a lecture on geology. Later, they all sleep inside the presidio. When the men on guard came inside at shift change they tell Glanton that the judge had danced naked on the walls. In the morning when they wake, the child is dead. The survivors did not attempt to avenge the child's life, possibly because Glanton gave them some much needed ammunition, but they did not wish their new friends a fond farewell. They ride up into the mountains and come upon a group of men. They were caballeros with pack mules laden with dried meat. The Americans might have traded for some meat, but they had no money and did not know what else they could trade.

### Chapter 9 Analysis

The gang is coming closer to a group of Indians as proven by the ambush at the beginning of the chapter and several other indications, such as the wagon full of dead people. This foreshadows a time when the gang will have to fight a group of Indians. The Dakotas come back with the Kentuckian's horse with all his stuff still in the saddle



bags. This suggests one of two things, either the man was killed by Indians after deserting or the Dakotas killed him for deserting. Either way, this does not bode well for others who wish to desert and is a clear motivation for the kid to stay with the gang. When the gang comes up on the presidio and finds the group of men hiding there, the most interesting thing about it is not the Indians who are presumably chasing them, which foreshadows once more an encounter between the Indians and the gang, but the death of the child. The reader might wonder who killed the child, but it seems quite clear when the chapter is analyzed in depth. The guards tell Glanton that they saw the judge dancing naked on a wall. While this foreshadows a moment at the end of the novel that reveals the death of another major character, it also should point out to the reader who has killed the boy. The judge is an evil man, a theme of the novel, and he does dark and evil things. This action goes to the judge's character, as well as his motivations as it shows what the judge is capable of. It also foreshadows other moments in the novel, when children will go missing.



# Chapter 10

## Chapter 10 Summary

The kid and the ex-priest, Tobin, are sitting in camp while the kid repairs a strap. Tobin begins to talk about the judge and how he once saved the whole gang from massacre. Tobin clearly admires the judge, bragging about how intelligent he is, how he has traveled all over the world, and how he learned to speak Dutch from a Dutchman. Tobin also says that everyone in the gang has met the judge somewhere else before coming to be here. Finally, Tobin tells the kid how once the gang got into a fight with some Indians and ended up hiding out in a cave, low on gunpowder. They moved on and ran into the judge sitting on a rock alone. The judge joined their group and led them to a range of mountains. They traveled all day and came to a cave, where the judge had them leave their belongings and fill their wallets with dirt. When they came to a high pass the next day, the judge sent them forward and told them to come back in forty eight hours. The men did as they were told. When they came back, the judge had gotten guano and built a kiln. The judge also had ground charcoal and saltpeter. Then, he told them to move on.

That next day, they came to a vast malpais. The judge stood on some rocks and gave them a sermon about how the earth held good things for these men. The malpais was a bit of a maze. Within it there were lava rocks and brimstone. The judge took some brimstone, the ingredients he had brought up, and the dirt from the men's wallets into the kiln. Then, he had the men urinate on the whole mess. Soon the judge was mixing all this by hand and smearing it on the walls. The men watched, just as concerned with the judge's sanity as the Indians that were sure to find them sooner rather than later. When that finally happened, the judge took the mess from the walls where it had been drying, put it in their guns, and then the judge fired at the Indians who had started to appear below them. After emptying his gun, the judge called down to the Indians in Spanish. The judge told the Indians everyone was dead, except him. Then, the gang ambushed the Indians.

## Chapter 10 Analysis

This chapter explains how the judge came to be with the Glanton gang, showing an almost generous side of the novel's antagonist that has not been visible up until now. However, the reader must also realize the awe this man has inspired and the fear as well. At the end of the chapter, Tobin suggests they not talk about the judge anymore because he has hearing like a fox. This again suggests fear of the same man who once saved his life. It also explains to the reader some of the judge's behavior in previous chapters. The judge seems to take charge from time to time, telling even Glanton what should be done. This chapter explains why Glanton might defer to the judge, because he has proven to know things that the others do not and to have skills that can save them all in a moment of crisis. Perhaps, there is also a little sense of responsibility as



well, a feeling that they all owe their lives to the judge, therefore they must listen to him and be respectful. This chapter also reveals to the reader that no one truly knows where the judge comes from, where he was educated, or even why he is called the judge. All of these touch on the theme of survival. The gang has survived due to the judge's knowledge, and they continue to survive because of the judge's knowledge. Not only this, but the men are wary of the judge, careful what they do and say around him, again hoping not to incur his wrath. It also touches on the theme of evil. The judge keeps these people under his thumb, scaring them so deeply that they refuse to leave the gang or even speak loudly about him for fear of what he might do to them. This touches upon the concept of evil, because only an evil man could have such a fearful hold on so many people.



# Chapter 11

## Chapter 11 Summary

They ride into the mountains through a pine forest. At dusk, Glanton's horse shies at a bear. While Glanton is pulling his gun and struggling to stay on the panicking horse, the Dakota beside him is pulled from his horse and dragged away. Glanton shot the bear several times, but it still managed to drag the Dakota into the woods. The other Dakotas search for their lost comrade, but have no luck in finding him. They return to camp, divide up his belongings, and move on with the rest of the gang.

The gang rides for several days through a hot desert, camping one night in the ruins of an old village. The judge spends the night walking the ruins, picking up a few artifacts and sketching them into a book. The judge also spends the next day doing the same thing. Someone asks him why, and he says he plans to wipe them all from man's memory. The man debates this with him, but the judge talks circles around him. Someone else asks the judge what kind of Indians these ones had been. The judge says dead ones. Then, he proceeds to tell them a story about a harness maker who liked to dress up like an Indian on the road and beg for money. One day, the man stopped a younger man who refused to give the harness maker anything and spoke to him in a way that made him ashamed. The harness maker then invited the man home for lunch. While there, they saw a black man conducting the funeral march for his brother. The man gave a speech about how a black man was no less a man, just like a crazy man is no less a man. The harness maker apologized and offered to walk the young man down the road. There, the harness maker killed the man and buried him beside the road. The harness maker goes home and tells his wife that he was robbed and the traveler killed. The wife goes to the grave and visits it many times over the remainder of her life. The son is so jealous of the dead man that he digs him up and scatters his bones in a nearby field.

After some of the men call out corrections to the story according to the way they have heard it, the judge adds a rider. The traveler had a bride waiting at home with him, who was pregnant. The son lives his whole life with the image of a perfect father. This idea of perfection drives the son insane attempting to live up to it. The judge disparages this way of raising a child and suggests that it is an example of all mankind, how it wears itself out by the pinnacle of success. All mankind will become extinct by its own perceptions of reality.

They ride on and start coming across signs of Indians. They find no one for miles, but Glanton will not turn back for fear of ambush. When the Dakotas tell him that the village ahead is empty, Glanton still refuses to ride into them until daylight. When they do explore the village, all they find is a vicious dog. Glanton coaxes it with a piece of jerky, and the dog became his. They followed a path that night that was so treacherous that they were forced to camp on the ledge until morning. Finally, they got word from the scouts that the Indians were about fifty miles up the trail.



## Chapter 11 Analysis

The majority of this chapter is taken up by the story that the judge tells the men about civilization. The judge collects things and records them in his book because he wants to erase them from men's memories. The judge thinks that all men should live life as if they have had no parent, no past, and no baggage. The judge says the reason so many civilizations have died is because they are stuck on their baggage. This again goes to the judge's character elements, to his ideas as they affect his behavior. It also foreshadows a time when the judge's opinions might prove to have some merit when he comes across one of these men much later in time. The end of the chapter also foreshadows the next chapter as the scouts return to the camp in order to report they have finally located some Indians.



# Chapter 12

## Chapter 12 Summary

For the next two weeks, they ride silently at night. They killed the pack animals and jerked the meat. They moved north, toward Texas, and ran into several storms, thunder and hail. In the morning they saw fire light. Five wagons burned on the desert floor with the dead scattered about. They followed the tracks left by the killers, and Delawares moved ahead to scout out the trail further up. The Delawares came back two days later to report that the Indians were four hours ahead with their women and children. They reached the area before dawn and attacked. They killed everyone in their paths, riding through tents and dragging women and children out of their beds. When a group of warriors appeared on the small incline, Glanton shot the leader. However, when he returned with the head, the judge told him it was not Gomez. When it is over, the judge rides off with a child on his saddle with him. They camp that night and Brown tries to get someone to help him with an arrow wound, but no one will do it. Finally, the kid volunteers and is later warned by Tobin that he has made a mistake.

They continue to travel with a group of Indians close on their trail and on the third night the judge murders the child he has kept with him since the massacre at the village and scalps him. Toadvine presses his gun against the judge's head and threatens to shoot, but eventually puts the gun away. On the fifth day, they came up on a hacienda where the young don came out to greet them at the same time his workers fled the fields. The gang moves on, leaving the don with only a small pistol to fight the Indians with. The gang continues to move, fighting the Indians once in Encinillas and again near El Sauz. Soon after, they ride into Chihuahua City to the cheers of the people, as though they were heroes.

## Chapter 12 Analysis

The Glanton gang has been tracking a group of Indians for some time now and finally come upon a place where they are sure to find them. Sure enough, they come upon a village that is filled with women and children. A massacre occurs that illuminates the theme of death and murder, once more. The reader is subjected to a graphic description of how the gang rides into the village killing everyone in sight. It becomes apparent that Glanton has believed these Indians to be part of the group that rides with Gomez, the man whose head could win him a lot of money from the governor of Chihuahua. However, when the warriors appear and Glanton successfully kills the leader, it is clearly not Gomez.

When they leave the massacred village, the judge takes with him a small child he later kills. This again highlights the theme of evil, showing the darkest side of the judge's character. Toadvine attempts to murder the judge for what he has done, but he is frightened of the judge and backs off. This illustrates not only Toadvine's character, but





the fear and power the judge has over the men of the Glanton gang. The gang moves on, continuously fighting with the Indians following them, even leaving a young don and his people to the mercy of the Indians, again illustrating the lack of morality that Glanton and the judge possess. The gang arrives in Chihuahua City at the end of the chapter, foreshadowing the following chapter in which the men enjoy their time off perhaps a little too much.



# Chapter 13

## Chapter 13 Summary

The gang parades through town, accepting gifts from the people, celebrated as though they are heroes. Their scalps are counted and paid for. Most of the gang goes to the baths where they clean up before going on to the taverns to hopefully meet some of the local women. The merchants come and sell them new clothing and various luxuries to aid in their cleanup attempts. That night, they are all invited to the governor's for dinner in their honor. The governor has trouble controlling the men and this becomes worse as the night wears on and the men become drunk. The gang then moves on the dancing halls where they drink, fight, and cause chaos everywhere they go. Soon government officials attempt to quite the men and are warned away.

Several weeks later, the men move on to the village of Coyame. They're again treated as saints, because they were hunting for Gomez, who has terrorized the village for many years. Then they go to Presidio on the Texas border where Glanton could go no further because he is wanted there. They travel for several weeks looking for sign of the Indians but find none. Later, they come across a band of Tiquas not bothering anyone and slaughter them all, must to the contempt of some of the gang members, including Toadvine. They travel for a long time, passing nearly deserted villages, traveling through sand so deep they must dismount their horses, and into the mountains where they can see city lights below them.

As they ride out of the governor's palace, two guards stop Toadvine, accusing him of stealing the brass teeth of one of the prison guards. Toadvine calls to Glanton to help him, which he does. They ride under escort out of town and then stop in the small town of Nacori. Tobin stays outside and watches a funeral parade move by, watching the other horses shy at the rockets, but not the horses belonging to the Glanton gang. A fight breaks out inside due to some unfriendly comments hurled at the Glanton gang by some locals and the judge kills several men. All the men in the cantina are killed, and Tobin kills several more on the street before the gang can scalp the victims and leave town. A few days later, they enter another town where Glanton goes temporarily insane and kills all the people who have run to the church for safety. Still later, they move into a mountain town where they take the horses in the corral and had a gun fight with a group of Mexican soldiers. Several soldiers get away. Glanton sends five scouts after them, and they return telling them where the soldiers were. The gang follows the soldiers as they make their way back to Chihuahua City. The gang catches up with the soldiers outside the gates of Chihuahua City. Glanton shoots them down and has his men bury them in a common grave. They ride into the city and are celebrated as before, but a week later a price is put on Glanton's head.



## Chapter 13 Analysis

The gang enters Chihuahua City to receive payment for the scalps they have collected. However, they make such a nuisance of themselves while celebrating; the city is probably more than glad to see them go. This again touches on setting as character. It was common in the Old West for law and order to be slight even in large towns. Not only this, but when a gang has a contract to kill people, it is unrealistic to believe they can control this behavior at times when civility is required. This also shows that the violence within the Glanton gang is escalating, foreshadowing the rest of the chapter in which the violence does in fact escalate. The gang kills a group of people who are not harming anyone, something that does not sit well with certain members of the gang, such as Toadvine. There is a fight in a cantina that results in many dead people. Glanton massacres a whole village for no apparent reason before getting into a gun battle with a group of soldiers, then tracking down the survivors in order to kill and bury them.

The theme of murder and death is never as vivid in this novel as it is at this point. Glanton and his gang are killing people wherever and how ever they feel like they want. It is gratuitous violence, but again it illustrates the time of the novel in which people were mostly allowed to behave as they wished, even being placed under contract to kill certain groups of individuals. When Toadvine is accused of stealing someone's brass teeth, this is satisfaction of foreshadowing that took place while Toadvine, the kid, and the Kentuckian were in jail. At the end of the chapter, a price is put on Glanton's head, suggesting all this violence has finally offended the governor of Chihuahua enough that he no longer wants to be associated with the gang. This foreshadows a time when the gang finds someone else to pay for the scalps they collect.



# Chapter 14

## Chapter 14 Summary

They travel through storms for several days, passing through meadows and mountain ranges. Nine days after leaving Chihuahua City, they pass a gap in the mountains and descend a path that is narrow and treacherous. They enter the small town of Jesus Maria where they stop to wait out the rain. The next day, they explore the town. After that, there is a feast of Las Animas with a parade through the streets. The following day, Glanton fires his gun in the courtyard in a drunken rage, so the judge puts him to bed and cares for him. A little girl has gone missing, and the whole town is looking for her. A young boy offers to sell the judge a puppy. The judge pays for both the boy's puppies and then throws them into the river. Bathcat shoots them as they float by. Glanton has escaped from the bonds the judge has put on him and rides a mule to which he has tied the Mexican flag to its tail. Someone begins to fire at him, so the judge, Tobin, and Doc Irving come to his assistance. They are forced to make a run for it, leaving six men behind. These men are shot.

That night, they come upon a mule train containing over a hundred mules packed with flasks of quicksilver for the mines. Glanton moves past the lead man, nearly pushing him off the ledge, followed by each of his men. Brown shoots the lead man and throws him to the rocks below. The other muleteers began to run, crashing through the underbrush as quickly as they could, taking the lag mules with them. Carroll and Sanford, two Americans who joined the gang from Jesus Maria, became separated from the group. When they look back, they see that the mules have been driven off the side of the bluff. When they reach the rest of the gang, the judge demands to know where Jackson is. They do not know except that he was not among the men shot. Two of the Delawares go in search of Jackson. At dawn, the judge and the Delawares return with Jackson, naked except for a blanket and his pistol.

The gang begins to make their way out of the mountains. The judge has taken to riding with the Delawares, dressing colorfully, and pressing leaves into his book. Toadvine asks him about it one night. The judge says that everything that exists outside his knowledge exists without his permission. Toadvine argues with him, but the judge seems to be a step ahead with every argument, going as far to suggest that birds should all be kept in a zoo rather than allowed to fly free. The next morning, they head out again, eventually arriving at the town of Ures, the capital of Sonora. The gang takes over a hostel on the edge of town and Glanton hires a group of young boys to care for the horses. They also arranged for chefs to cook a large meal and other service providers. The gang has a wild party and is asleep by early morning. Glanton and the judge leave, while the others sleep.



## Chapter 14 Analysis

Again, the judge shows his evil side. While staying in a small village, the judge kills a couple of animals during a time of celebration for the town regarding animals. Later, Glanton goes crazy and in contrast to his evil side, the judge cares for him. Then, word gets out that a little girl is missing. Since the reader has seen the judge kill a child for no apparent reason, the reader must realize that it is most likely the judge who has made this little girl disappear. This again illuminates the theme of evil as the judge continues to do things that are heinous and inexcusable. Later, when the judge has a conversation about his book with Toadvine, the judge states that things that exist without his knowledge do not have his permission. This is interesting because it continues to illustrate the judge's personality, his character elements, as well as again showing how he thinks in the realm of the theme of evil. The judge is pompous, conceited, and somehow supernatural all at the same time. The judge does show more complexity to his character, however, when he goes after Jackson to save him from his fate after the gunfight in Jesus Marias.

The men continue to travel, chasing always after the Indians. They have little luck in the front, though they do find trouble both in Jesus Marias and on the road out of there. The incident with the mule train illustrates the gangs lack of moral fiber and their desire to kill rather than be killed, again touching on the theme of death and murder. The gang has just had several members of their rank killed so they strike out at the first group of people they come to. Finally, they arrive in the capitol city of Sonora and party, enjoying the food and warmth of a hostel rather than the cold ground where they normally spend their nights. In the morning, the judge and Glanton leave them, foreshadowing the next chapter that will reveal their business.



# Chapter 15

## Chapter 15 Summary

In early December, they ride out of Sonora with a contract from the governor. They travel through the Sonoran desert, looking for Indians but unable to find any sign. Then, they come up on a pueblo on the Nacozari River where they massacre everyone in residence. A few days later, they come across a Sonoran cavalry led by General Elias. A fight breaks out the finds the Glanton gang less seven men. They had three wounded with them. The next morning, Glanton makes the men chose arrows to see who will stay behind with the men and shoot them before rejoining the gang. The kid gets one of these arrows. Two of the injured are Delawares, so two of the Delawares traded with the other two men who were chosen. The kid is left to kill the one Mexican. However, after the Delawares have moved on, the kid listens to the man argue with him over his death. Finally, the kid leaves him alive with water but no weapon.

The kid travels toward where he expects to find the rest of the gang and runs into another man from the gang who was left behind because his horse is injured. The kid decides to walk with this man rather than leave him behind. They begin climbing a rocky wash as it begins to snow. That night they sleep in the snow and are approached by a forward company from Elias's unit. The kid wakes and shoots one of the men. The kid can hear musket fire, as he runs away, shooting at another man in the woods. Now, the kid is companion-less and horse-less. The kid walks higher up into the mountains, nearly freezing his feet as he goes. The next day he sees the entire army move below him. The kid continues on, moving down the other side of the mountain and onto a flat plain. A thunderstorm ignites a lone tree where the kid uses the heat to warm himself. The kid finds a stream and drinks. Later, he finds a sight where the gang has burned the scalps they collected at Nacozari. In the dark, he comes upon a horse wandering alone. The kid talks to it, calms it, pulls it to the ground, and rides it. The kid realizes this is a packhorse that the gang bought back in Ures. Later in the morning, another horse joins them. Around noon, the kid sees riders ahead. Finally, the kid rejoins the gang, finding them wounded and exhausted from another battle with Elias. Four are dead.

The kid does not see Toadvine and fears he is dead, but hopes he has gone ahead with the scouts. The kid sleeps as they ride with Tobin beside him. When they camp that night, the judge picks a horse to kill and asks for someone to help. The kid volunteers to prove he is not afraid of the judge. They prepare the horse together without any further drama. The next day, they continue on, coming across an alkali pan where they find men's heads. Further up they find a pair of wagons that have been burned and contain the torsos of the men whose heads they had already seen. Later, they arrive at the town of Santa Cruz. They have a meal and then sleep in the barn with a mare and her colt.



## Chapter 15 Analysis

The kid is left behind to kill an injured man, so he will not be left to the torture of the soldiers following them from Sonora. The kid does not kill the man, although he knows he should. Instead, the kid does as the man asks, hides him in the bushes and leaves him alive. This again goes to the kid's character elements, showing that he is not the cold blooded killer that the gang has portrayed him to be. Later, when he meets up with another member of the gang who has been left behind due to an injury to his horse, the kid stops and walks with him in order to keep him company. The kid does not do this because he feels that he has to, but because he wants to. However, in contrast to his earlier behavior, when they come under attack by Elias's scouts, the kid runs and does not stop to help his companion. This goes to the theme of survival. The kid does what he must do to survive. Later, when he is walking through the mountains in snow and then across the plains, he again illustrates this theme as he struggles to find water and shelter, to find heat to warm his fingers and toes. The lone tree in the desert that is struck by lightning is a symbol of this survival instinct and a gift from the supernatural forces that seem to move throughout this novel. When the kid reaches the gang, it is back to business as always, foreshadowing the following chapters.



# Chapter 16

## Chapter 16 Summary

They continue on the next morning, passing through San Bernadino, where a wild bull charges one of the men and kills the horse. The next day, they come to the old mission at San Jose de Tumacacori. The judge goes off to take a look at the church although Glanton does not want to stop. Glanton follows anyway, concerned when he hears gunfire. There are two men who have been living in the church for several years, left behind by some wagon train. One of the men is mentally impaired. It is the other brother that one of the gang members shot when he startled them inside the church. They leave there and camp in the desert nearby. The next morning, they pass a few deserted haciendas and pick up the tracks of a group of Indians. Some time later, they find their scouts, hung upside down from trees and mutilated. The next day, they come up on the presidio of Tucson. On the road leading to the presidio they find graves of murdered travelers and the remnants of animals that have been killed for meat. When they reach the wall, they find a group of Indians making camp outside. The Indians leaders approach Glanton and before a word can be said. Glanton's horse takes a bite out of one of the Indian's pony's ear. The Indian is angry, but an older leader comes up to calm him. Finally, they bargain with the gang to get them a barrel of whiskey in the city. Glanton agrees.

The gang goes into the city, where they find a city nearly in ruins, afraid of the Indians outside their gate. A lieutenant meets them when they enter the city. Glanton asks where they can get a drink and the man assures them none of the taverns are open yet. Glanton took his men to one of the taverns anyway and got the barkeep out of bed. The barkeep told them of a man wanting to go to California who might want to travel with them. When the judge went to check it out, he found a man who ran a freak show using his deformed little brother as the attraction. The judge agreed to let the two men join them, but told the man that he had to pay a fee. Later the gang goes to a diner to have a meal. While there, the proprietor tells them he does not serve colored people. They argue with him, forcing him to give an explanation of why he considers Jackson a man who does not deserve to eat in his business. Brown gives the owner a gun and tells him to shoot Jackson. The man hesitates and Jackson shoots him. A while later, the lieutenant finds them and attempts to arrest Glanton. The judge stands up and speaks in Glanton's defense. The judge speaks eloquently, telling the lieutenant that he has no case because he has been with Glanton all day and did not see him do anything wrong. The lieutenant can do nothing but leave.

That night, the lieutenant comes again, and he and the judge have a long talk over the points of law. The next morning, it is revealed that a young Mexican girl is missing, but her clothes have been found at a point in the wall where she could only have been thrown. The gang gets a barrel of whiskey and prepares to leave the city, stopping that night to party a little. The next afternoon, the gang goes to retrieve their horses and the judge gets into a contest with the men over whether he could first lift the farrier's anvil,





could lift it over his head, and then could throw it a good distance. The judge wins every time.

## Chapter 16 Analysis

The gang is once more on the hunt for Indians. They eventually find a trail, after a few short adventures. First a horse is killed by a wild bull. Then, they find two men living in a church and kill one without knowing who he was. They leave the man and his simple brother behind, this act again symbolizing the time of the novel as a character. This also foreshadows an event later in the novel when they will take into their ranks a man and his damaged brother. When they approach Tucson, they meet up with a group of Indians outside the city walls who have been terrorizing the city, trying to get whiskey. Glanton's horse injures one of their horses, so he agrees to get them some whiskey, an interesting contrast to his behavior in the past. Glanton does not seem interested in killing these Indians, but perhaps this is simply foreshadowing into a scheme Glanton has planned to trick the Indians.

Inside the city, the gang adds a new man to their number who has a brother that he exploits in a side show type of enterprise. Also during their stay, Jackson kills a man who refuses to serve him in his diner, and the judge kills another young girl. However, the narrator again does not tell the reader exactly who it is that is killing these children, but past behavior tells the reader. This again touches on the theme of murder and death, as well as the judge's evil behavior that illustrates the theme once more of evil. Finally, the judge rescues Glanton from arrest with his charming speeches and his lies. Later, the judge wins a contest where he throws an extremely heavy anvil. This again goes to the judge's supernatural knowledge and abilities that seem to imply that he is not a normal human being, foreshadowing a time when this belief will be essential to the development of the plot.



# Chapter 17

## Chapter 17 Summary

They ride at dusk. The sentinel tries to stop them but is unsuccessful. They make their exchange with the Indians. The lieutenant has come outside the walls and watches the transaction, asking Brown if they are not afraid the Indians will follow them. Brown assures him that Indians do not ride at night. Besides, Glanton has rigged the barrel so that it contains mostly water. They ride through the night and most of the next morning. Glanton watches his men sleep, thinking that so many of them are either dead or deserted, including all of the Delawares. A few days later, they run into a legion of soldiers under Colonel Garcia. These men are bedraggled and using derelict weapons. Glanton allows them to pass.

The gang continues to travel. One night they have a philosophical discussion about God and the universe. The judge does an act with a coin where he causes it to move over the fire. Then, he throws the coin into the air and it takes some time for it to reappear in his hand. There is much discussion over how the judge has done this, but no one seems able to figure it out. Another day the judge lectures on war after they have seen an Indian crucified in the desert, comparing warmongers to the religious men. Tobin says he does not agree. A few days later, they reach the Colorado River. Here there are the survivors of a wagon train that has been hit by cholera. Also living nearby is a group of Indians. There is also a doctor who is running a ferry across the river. Glanton talks to him about his enterprise, learning his name is Lincoln, and he is from New York. The judge speaks with the doctor at length. Later that night, Glanton, the judge, and a group of men go to talk to the Indians.

## Chapter 17 Analysis

The Glanton gang has lost numbers and seems to have lost their purpose. Glanton passes up an opportunity to attack a group of soldiers while the judge spends many hours lecturing philosophically with the men. The judge does a coin trick that can only be placed once more under the mysterious and mystical side of his character elements, underscoring the behaviors that up to this point have seemed interesting but not inhuman. The judge's trick seems to symbolize both the gentle and good things about the judge, as he is attempting to entertain, and the strange and abnormal things about him, as there seems to be little explanation for the coin's ability to stay in the air so long. However, the point of this chapter seems to be that the gang has lost their purpose, foreshadowing the next chapter in which their arrival at the river seems to have given them a new opportunity to use their talents as outlaws.



# Chapter 18

## Chapter 18 Summary

The judge, Glanton, and the other members of the gang come back from the Indian camp at dawn. They had come to an agreement to take over the ferry. The women from the wagon train discover the side show man's brother that day and demand to be allowed to give the boy a bath. The man releases the boy from his cage and hands him over to the women who bathe him and dress him. One of the women takes on the care of the boy as though he is a small child, putting him in a suit and tucking him into bed at night. That night, the judge is walking beside the river, and he finds the boy drowning. The judge saves him and takes him back to camp.

## Chapter 18 Analysis

This chapter shows the kinder side to the time in which the novel is written, showing that there is some kindness in all people, even the judge. This also foreshadows a time in which the judge will make a kind of friend out of the boy and take care of him.



# Chapter 19

## Chapter 19 Summary

The doctor had been on the way to California, when he took over the ferry. The doctor lives in a hillside fortification left by a military unit. Among the things left in the fortification was a howitzer. Glanton and the judge go with a few men and convince the doctor he and the survivors of the wagon train are in danger from the Indians and that Glanton and the gang will protect them if he will give them the gun. The doctor agrees. Two days later, the Indians attack and Brown and another man use the howitzer to protect the ferry. The Indians become upset that some of their men have died. Glanton scalps the dead. The doctor disappears into his quarters and does not reappear for several days. Glanton and his men take over the ferry and begin robbing the people of all their goods whenever they come to cross. Glanton also collects a group of Indians and children to work on the fortification, repairing the walls.

In April, Brown and two other men go into San Diego to get supplies. While there, Toadvine and Long Webster are arrested after a night of heavy drinking. Brown learns of this and goes to the farrier to have him saw off his shot gun. The man refuses, so Brown does it himself. The man gets a soldier and tries to have Brown arrested, but is unsuccessful. Toadvine and Webster are released from jail, and they find Brown and spend the afternoon drinking. While drunk, Brown pours liquor over a soldier and lights him on fire. Brown wakes in jail the next morning. Brown pays off a young soldier to break him out of jail. However, Toadvine and Webster do not know this, and they go back to camp to tell Glanton that Brown is in jail. Glanton and some men go into town to retrieve Brown. They invade the home of the jail keeper and tie him and his wife up. Then they torture the man, until he tells them that Brown is gone. Relieved of their duty, Glanton and his men enjoy a few drinks before returning to camp.

Glanton returns alone to the landing because his men have gone to the gold fields in California. When he arrives he finds a young Mexican girl naked beside a wall. Glanton goes to the landing and the doctor comes toward him, begging him to do something about the violence and atrocities going on, but Glanton kicks him away. Glanton eventually sees the judge and Jackson standing naked on one of the walls and hears the rest of the men drinking. The next morning, the Indians attack and massacre the entire gang, including Glanton and Jackson, but the judge gets away with the side show boy, because he has the howitzer with him. The Indians have a bonfire, and they burn both the body of Glanton and the doctor and hang their heads where everyone can see.

## Chapter 19 Analysis

Glanton conspires with the Indians to create a fake raid on the ferry in order to scare the doctor into believing he is in danger and to get him to give the ferry up to Glanton and his gang. The Indians do their part, but Glanton has his men use a howitzer, killing



several Indians, which was not part of the deal. It does cause the doctor to leave the ferry to them, but it also foreshadows a dark reaction on behalf of the Indians later in the chapter. Glanton and his gang have found something they can do that is just as lucrative as killing Indians, stealing from the people desiring to use the ferry. They settle down and begin to enjoy staying in one place for once. However, when Brown and Toadvine and Webster go into town for supplies, they create the same sort of chaos they have created everywhere else and get in trouble. Glanton goes to rescue Brown when he learns of his fate, but proves to be too late. However, in this action Glanton has proven himself to be a symbolic father figure to these men, coming to their rescue when they need him. This explores Glanton's character elements, showing him as human, caring, and somewhat considerate. However, his treatment of the jail keeper was less than considerate.

Glanton returns to the camp and finds it in chaos with the judge once more dancing naked as the reader has seen him do on many occasions before, this time with Jackson, who the reader might have suspected as being something like the judge. Not only this, but the judge has been up to his old tricks again, as witnessed by the young, naked girl in the camp. This goes to the theme of evil as the judge has clearly been mistreating the young girl. Not only this, but Glanton does nothing about it. Finally, the Indians return to exact revenge for their fallen brothers, massacring nearly the entire gang. This illustrates the theme of death and murder once more, though it is usually the Glanton gang on the other side of the murders. This is an ironic twist to their usual behavior or perhaps it is poetic justice.



# Chapter 20

## Chapter 20 Summary

Toadvine and the kid escape into the woods upriver and make a run for it. The Indians see them and give chase, shooting arrows at them as they run. One arrow hits the kid in the leg. The kid refuses to allow Toadvine to remove it. At dusk the kid and Toadvine come to the wells at Alamo Mucho where they find the ex-priest, Tobin. Tobin asks about the people back at camp, but they do not tell him anything. They make a hiding place in a pit around the well and watch the Indians attempt to approach them. The kid takes a position against the Indians and fires on them with Tobin's help with shade and aim, killing one. It soon became too dark to fight. By morning, the Indians were gone. Shortly after, the judge and the side show boy come up, both naked. The judge talks Toadvine into giving up his hat and then begins to ask if anyone has a gun. The judge has food and suggests that the kid join him. Tobin tells him not to do it. Eventually the kid decides to stay with Tobin and to move on in case the Indians come back. Toadvine chooses to stay with the judge.

While traveling, the kid and Tobin run into Brown. They tell Brown what has happened, and Brown decides to continue on toward the camp anyway, each watching the other warily. The next day Tobin and the kid stop at Carrizo Creek where they are fired on. The kid sees horses and then the judge, who has Toadvine and Brown's gear, and the side show boy. Tobin is shot in the throat. Tobin tells the kid he needs to kill the judge to keep him from following them. Tobin tells the kid that he also needs to kill the horses to keep the judge from using them to his advantage. The kid goes after the horses, kills them, and nearly runs straight into the judge. The kid manages to hide in the creek and escapes. Later, the kid and Tobin use the cover of darkness to move on. The next day, they rest on the promontory and when they wake they can see the judge coming toward them.

## Chapter 20 Analysis

Toadvine and the kid escape the Indians with minor injuries and find Tobin in the woods. They fight against the Indians and by morning the Indians are gone for some unknown reason. Then, the judge appears and it seems that perhaps it was the judge who ran them off, maybe because the Indians could sense something not right about him. The judge uses some food he has managed to find to get Toadvine to come to his side, to choose the evil side perhaps. Even when the kid refuses to stay with the judge, Toadvine does, essentially ending the kid and Toadvine's relationship. The kid goes off with Tobin and when they run into the judge again, the judge has Toadvine and Brown's gear, and he is trying to kill them. Tobin whispers instructions to the kid at the same time the judge is yelling for him to stop fighting destiny. It is as though there is a theme of good and evil here, with the judge as the evil one, touching on the theme of evil, and Tobin, the ex-priest, is the good one. The kid again takes the side of Tobin, kills the



judge's horses, and manages to move on. The kid has taken the side of good, illustrating his character elements and painting him, despite his association with the Glanton gang, as a good person. The final paragraph of the chapter mentions that the judge is coming toward them. This foreshadows the next chapter as the reader must be concerned that the judge will get his way and kill the kid and Tobin.



# Chapter 21

## Chapter 21 Summary

Tobin is weak and tired from his wound, telling the kid he should go on without him. The kid moves on and Tobin goes with him. The travel slowly due to their wounds and finally the kid decides they must hide. They have come to a watering place where there are a bunch of dead animals from the wagon trains that have passed through. The kid digs them a hiding place beneath a couple of mules that have died side by side. Not long after they climb into their hiding place, the judge comes through. The judge does not seem to realize they are there at first, continuing his walk past their hiding place. However, he turns around and comes back, calling out to them. The judge tells them that he knows they are there, but he will leave them be. The judge assures them that their time will come for their mutiny.

Tobin and the kid continue their walk, but they are very weak. Soon a group of Indians come across them and take pity on their condition, taking them to their village. They feed them and allow them to rest. The next day, they reach Warner's Ranch and refresh themselves in the sulfur springs. A few days later, they arrive in San Diego. The kid leaves Tobin in town and goes to the beach to watch the sun set.

## Chapter 21 Analysis

Tobin and the kid are wounded and weak, having trouble keeping their lead on the judge. Finally, the kid decides they must hide, an idea that seems brilliant, until the judge tells them that he knows they are there. The judge says they have mutinied, and they will pay for this. This foreshadows a time when the kid and the judge will come face to face once more. The judge moves on, and so do the kid and Tobin. Ironically, they are nearly dead when a group of Indians come on them and save their lives. After all the time Tobin and the kid spent hunting and killing Indians, it is the Indians who save their lives. Shortly after this, they enter California and it seems the whole episode is over.





# Chapter 22

## Chapter 22 Summary

The kid goes back into town and to a tavern. After a while some soldiers come and arrest him. The kid talks, telling the soldiers everything. One morning the kid wakes and finds the judge standing outside his cell. The judge tells him that Tobin has lost his mind and Toadvine and Brown are still lost in the desert. The judge also tells him that the soldiers plan to hang him, saying that he is crazy. The kid accuses the judge of being crazy, something that amuses the judge. The kid accuses the judge of being behind everything, saying that it should be him behind these bars. The judge leaves and the kid is released two days later.

The kid finds a doctor and asks him to remove the arrow that is still in his leg. The doctor quotes a price and the kid tries to leave, saying he cannot pay it. The doctor tells him he will do it for less, and he should come back the next morning. When the kid comes he is drunk because he expects the surgery to be painful. However, the doctor makes him sober up because he plans to do the surgery with anesthesia. While the kid recovers, he has terrible dreams about the judge. The kid spends the next few weeks on crutches, recovering, going around town asking everyone he can about Tobin, but no one knows anything. Finally the kid moves on to Las Angeles. There he witnesses a hanging and it turns out to be the hanging of Brown and Toadvine. The kid goes to one of the soldiers and buys Brown's necklace of human ears from him.

The kid continues to look for Tobin for a while and even attempts to find the side show boy the judge had with him at the end, but has no luck. The kid takes a job, but moves on after a short time. The kid begins to travel. Once shortly after his twenty-eighth birthday, the kid comes on a group of people headed toward the coast. The kid stops to sleep on a rock outcrop above where the pilgrims have camped. When the kid wakes in the middle of the night he finds them all dead. The kid goes down to look for survivors. The kid finds a woman, who is sitting on the ground among them. The kid talks to her, attempts to coax her up so he can take her away. However, when he touches her, the kid discovers the woman has been dead a very long time.

## Chapter 22 Analysis

The kid is arrested, but the soldiers apparently either believe the stories he tells them or that he is crazy because they let him go. Before this, the judge comes to see the kid, attempting to convince him that he is responsible, or at least that he told the soldiers this. The judge also tells the kid that Tobin is insane and Toadvine and Brown are lost in the desert where the kid left them. This encounter is strange and unsettling, almost suggesting that the judge is disappointed not to be able to get to the kid and that the judge perhaps had something to do with the kid's release so that he could be the one to end the kid's life and not the state. This foreshadows a time when the judge will get just



that opportunity. Later, after the kid has surgery to remove the arrow from his leg, he has dreams about the judge that also foreshadow another encounter with the judge, just as the judge predicted the kid would have when he left him in the desert.

The kid continues to look for Tobin and even makes an attempt to find the side show boy that the judge had with him during his walk in the desert. He never has any luck, suggesting to the reader that Tobin and the boy are dead. Then the kid sees the hanging of Toadvine and Brown, reducing the number of survivors from the Glanton gang to just himself and the judge. The final part of the chapter in which the kid is traveling and comes upon a group of travelers who are massacred while he sleeps above them seems to also foreshadow another murder later in the next chapter.



## Chapter 23

### Chapter 23 Summary

The man is traveling in North Texas and shares a camp and a few memories with an old buffalo hunter. A while later, he comes across a group of bone pickers. During the night while making camp near the bone pickers, a group of boys come over to talk to him. They are interested in the necklace of human ears he wears. One of the boys, Elrod, becomes disrespectful toward the man, calling him a liar. The man embarrasses Elrod in front of his friends and his brother. Later that night, Elrod comes back and attempts to shoot the man, but the man shoots him first. The next day, he watches as the boy's brother and friends come and collect his body.

The man enters a town the next day and goes to the tavern for a drink. There, he runs into the judge. The judge joins him at the bar, and they talk for a few minutes. The man then goes to the back of the tavern where a dance is being prepared. The man spends a few minutes with a prostitute and then leaves the building to use the outhouse. There, he runs into the judge and is brutally murdered. The judge goes to the dance and dances naked.

### Chapter 23 Analysis

The kid is no longer a kid, but a man now. The man continues to travel from place to place as he did when he was young. The man runs into a boy who is not unlike he was during the majority of the novel, young, basically orphaned, and ready to be a man. The man is forced to kill this boy when the boy comes to kill him. It is ironic that the man kills this boy because it is almost as if he has killed himself or what he was a child. It is symbolic of the ending of his childhood. Later, the man runs into the judge, and they have a philosophical discussion, both aware of how this meeting will end. Sure enough, it does end in the man's murder. The judge goes off to dance, just as he always did before when he would kill a small child, illustrating once more the theme of evil. The judge is evil. In this novel, evil has prevailed.



# Epilogue

## Epilogue Summary

A man walks through a plain, making holes and igniting fire in the rocks that God has put there. Around him are men who are searching for bones. They move on.

## Epilogue Analysis

The theme of evil is once more explored, only this time it is a contrast to evil. A man walks the plain, digging holes. Who is this man? It could be Tobin or the man, somehow resurrected from his brutal killing. It could also be some unknown nemesis of the judge. Whoever he is, he seems to be a force against the judge and this can only be a good thing.



# Characters

## The kid/The man

The kid is a young man from Tennessee who leaves home at fourteen because he is only a reminder to his father of his mother's death. The kid travels for a while, making a living doing what ever odd job he can find to do. Eventually, he ends up in Texas where he is robbed, and he helps a young man beat up a man, in the processes burning down a hotel. The kid goes on the run where he meets up with a renegade army unit who want him to join up. The kid does, but only days after they go into Mexico, the group is massacred by Indians. The kid gets away and travels through the desert, unsure where to go. He is joined by another member of his unit who is badly wounded in the arm.

The kid is eventually arrested for being a part of the renegade army company and meets up with Toadvine, a man he met the night he was robbed. Toadvine arranges for the kid and another man, as well as himself, to join the Glanton gang who is under contract by the Chihuahua governor to kill Indians. The kid finds the judge, another man he has met before, is part of the gang. This gang travels all through Mexico tracking Indians before they lose their contract with the Chihuahua governor and take a new one with the Sonora governor. Then, they come on a river where there is a ferry running from side to side. Glanton decides to take the ferry over and steal from the people going across. Eventually, a group of Indians who live nearby massacre the entire Glanton gang except for the kid, Tobin, Toadvine, Brown, and the judge.

The kid and Tobin leave Toadvine and the judge behind and travel on their own. The judge tracks them and attempts to kill them, but gives up after time. The kid and Tobin make it to California where they go their separate ways. The kid travels for the next few years, eventually ending up in the acquaintance of the judge once more. The judge has not aged a day. After having a discussion at the bar, the kid goes off to enjoy a dance. When he goes to the outhouse, the judge is waiting for him and the kid is murdered.

## Judge Holden

Judge Holden is a mythical character within the novel, often referred too in manners that suggest he is the devil or closely related to him. Once the judge walks across fire, another he creates gunpowder out of dirt and urine. The judge is highly intelligent, but no one knows where he comes from or where he learned his knowledge. In fact, no one knows where the judge came from. The judge simply appears at a time when the Glanton gang needs his help. The judge spends a lot of his time collecting objects and writing about them in a journal. When people ask why he does this, the judge says it is because he wants to chronicle the objects of the world before they disappear. People scoff at this, but the judge continues to do it.



There is also a very dark, evil side to the judge. Everywhere the gang goes children seem to disappear. Later, the narrator makes it clear that it is the judge doing these terrible things. There is also an episode in which the judge kills two puppies just for the sake of killing them. The judge is a dark personality who may appear to be generous and kind, but is really evil and dark. After the gang is massacred, the judge goes after the kid and Tobin, attempting to kill them. Later, the judge and the kid meet up and the judge finally does as he has wanted to do all along. The judge is mythical, violent, and evil, the perfect antagonist to a story such as this. The judge is the epitome of the violence of the Old West.

## Glanton

Glanton is the leader of a gang of men under contract to kill Indians due to their violent nature. Glanton is violent and cruel himself, killing Indian women and children as well as the Indian warriors who turn around and kill travelers in retaliation for the acts of men like Glanton. Glanton once kills an Indian woman who is of no danger to him just so he can add her scalp to the collection for which the governor of Chihuahua pays him. Glanton is also a man with a temper. Glanton becomes angry at a fortune teller when she foretells his death and has to be stopped from killing her by the judge. Although Glanton is the leader of the gang, it seems that the judge often has more power over the men and their situations than Glanton. Glanton makes most of the decisions when it comes to the simple things, such as where they will sleep for the night, but the judge tends to govern the men. Glanton is eventually killed by a group of Indians at a river where Glanton and his gang have taken over a ferry in order to steal from the people wanting to cross.

## Toadvine

Toadvine is a man that the kid meets while in Nacogdoches. The kid and Toadvine are attempting to cross the same boards placed across the muddy street when they get into a fight. During their fight another man comes along and knocks them both in the head and then robs them. The kid assists Toadvine in getting revenge against the man who did it, burning down a hotel in the process. Several weeks later, the kid is arrested and discovers that Toadvine is also a prisoner in the same jail. Toadvine arranges for the kid, himself, and another prisoner to join the Glanton gang rather than remain in jail.

Toadvine travels with the gang through their contract with the Chihuahua governor, the contract with the Sonora governor, and the river ferry. Toadvine survives the massacre by the Indians on the river, but when he and the kid meet up with Tobin and the judge joins them, Toadvine decides he is safer staying with the judge although the kid has a gun. The judge steals clothes and supplies from Toadvine and Brown, another survivor who joins them later, while the two men, Toadvine and Brown are arrested, taken to California, and hung.



## The ex-priest, Tobin

Tobin is a member of the Glanton gang. If the judge represents evil in this novel, then Tobin represents good or at least a conscience. The other members of the gang call Tobin the ex-priest because he once lived at a monastery but he never took his vows. Tobin becomes friends with the kid and is one of the few survivors of the massacre of the Glanton gang by a group of Indians. After the massacre, the kid and Toadvine run into Tobin in the woods as they are escaping the Indians. The three teamed up together until the judge comes along. The kid is the only person with a gun and the judge wanted it. Tobin warns the kid that the judge will kill him if he gives up his gun, so the kid does not. The kid and Tobin decide to move on, to put some distance between them and the judge, but Toadvine decides to stay with the judge. Further down the trail, the kid and Tobin run into another member of the gang who is returning to the river from a nearby town where he had gone for supplies and found himself arrested. Shortly after this, Tobin and the kid stop at a river and the judge comes up behind them, dressed and supplied by the belongings of Toadvine and Brown. The judge attempts to kill them, but they hide and eventually move on. However, the judge follows their trail, coming across them one more time in the desert where they hide in a makeshift hideaway. Finally, the kid and Tobin end up in California and separate.

## Sproule

Sproule is a member of Captain White's company who survives the Indian attack. Sproule takes off with the captain and several other survivors, but his horse is injured, and he is left behind when he cannot keep up. Sproule comes across the kid hours after the kid escapes the aftermath of the massacre. Sproule is injured in his arm and as he and the kid travel through the desert of Mexico his injury becomes gangrenous, and he becomes weak and sick. Sproule wants to go back to Texas, but the kid does not think they can make it that far, so the kid continues to lead them deeper into Mexico. Eventually they come across a family traveling in a cart and join them for a ride to the nearest populated village, since most of the villages they have passed so far have been destroyed by the Indians. While traveling in this cart, Sproule passes away from his injuries.

## Brown

Brown and his brother are both a part of the group. Brown is often at the front with Glanton, helping with the scouts and making the tough decisions. When the gang settles at the river in order to run the ferry, Brown goes into town with two other men to get supplies. While there, Brown lights a soldier on fire and is arrested. Soon after Brown bribes a soldier into helping him get out of jail. Glanton does not know this, and he goes into town to rescue him but learns, after he has tortured the jail keeper and his wife, that Brown has already gone. Somehow Glanton gets back to camp and is massacred along with everyone else, while Brown does not reach camp until much later. Brown runs into the kid and Tobin on his way back and has the opportunity to turn



around and go with them, but decides not to. Brown meets up with the judge and somehow loses his guns and some other belongings to the judge. Months later, the kid sees Brown hung in Las Angeles. The kid buys a necklace of human ears from a soldier that Brown has always worn. This is how the reader recognizes the kid later when he has become the man.

## The Delawares

There are several Delaware Indians within the Glanton gang. The Delawares act as scouts, and they also use their knowledge of tracks to aid the gang in finding the Indians they are searching for. The Delawares are great warriors. The Delawares keep to themselves most of the time. Several of the Delawares die during the course of the novel and their friends deal with their illness and burial themselves rather than allow the men to help them. One Delaware dies when a bear drags him off of his horse, leaving his friends with only his belongings to divide among themselves. When two of the Delawares are injured and must be killed in order to protect them from the military unit quickly coming to where they are, the Delawares refuse to allow any of the white men to take the duty for fear they will chicken out. Ironically, the kid does just this, allowing the man he is supposed to kill to survive despite the terrible torture he will more than likely endure. There were many Delaware with the group when the kid and Toadvine first join them, but the final two die when they are sent forward to scout and are caught by Indians who hang them and mutilate them. They die as they have lived, brutally.

## Black John Jackson

There are two John Jacksons in the gang, one white, one black. The black Jackson is friendly with the judge, strange and dark in his behavior just like the judge. Jackson has been seen dancing naked like the judge, joining a magic group even though he does not know their tricks, and chanting. The two Jacksons do not get along. When the kid first joins the gang, there is a lot of betting over which Jackson will kill the other. One night after the gang rides out of a village where the white Jackson has gotten drunk and is suffering the effects, the white Jackson does not want the black Jackson to sit at his campfire. The white Jackson goes as far as pulling a gun on the other. The other Jackson does not argue with him, he simply clarifies what the white Jackson is intending to do. The black Jackson walks off and returns a moment later with a Bowie knife. The black Jackson cuts off the white Jackson's head and leaves him next to the fire, as if he is sitting there to enjoy the warmth.

## The Kentuckian

The Kentuckian is a war veteran who came down to Mexico to retrieve a lover he had to leave behind at the end of the war. Somehow the Kentuckian ends up in prison in Chihuahua City with Toadvine and the kid. The kid and Toadvine become friendly with the Kentuckian, listening to his stories about the war and making plans to attempt to





escape the prison. When the Glanton gang comes into town, Toadvine makes arrangements for them all to join the gang. At first the Kentuckian is content to travel with the group, but after the group leaves after a short break in a small village. The judge apparently has a couple of the Delawares go after him, and they bring back his horse, complete with all his gear, but no Kentuckian. They burn his belongings, put the horse back with the other spares, and ride on. The reader might interpret this event as a warning to the other men not to desert the gang.



# Objects/Places

## Mule

In the beginning of the novel, the kid has an old mule that is too thin and too old to make a very good riding mule. The kid sells it when he joins the army and uses the money to buy a new saddle.

## Water

The kid frequently travels through the deserts of Mexico and water is an important resource.

## Brass Teeth

There is a jailer at the prison in Chihuahua City has brass teeth and Toadvine is later accused of stealing the man's teeth, presumably after he kills him.

## Prison in Chihuahua City

The kid is put in prison in Chihuahua City after the army unit he signed up with is massacred by Indians. It is during this time that the kid hooks up with Toadvine again and signs up to join the Glanton Gang.

## Chihuahua Government

When the kid first signs up with the Glanton gang, they have a contract with the Chihuahua governor and his government to kill Indians and to find a rebel Indian leader named Gomez. Later Glanton has a falling out with the Chihuahua governor and signs a similar contract with the Sonora governor.

## Guns

The members of the Glanton, most of them, carry some sort of gun in order to protect themselves and to kill the Indians they have been hired to kill. The kid carries a revolver.

## The Judge's Gun

The Judge has a revolver that is mounted in silver and that is inscribed with the words, Et In Arcadia Ego, which literally translated means, and in Arcadia I go and is a phrase which has been associated with the mystery surrounding the Holy Grail.



## **Knives**

Most of the Glanton gang also carries knife because they often remove the scalps of the Indians they kill in order to prove the kill for payment.

## **Scapular**

One of Glanton's men, Brown, wears around his neck a necklace of ears he has taken from his victims. After Brown is hung, the kid buys the scapular from a soldier who took it from Brown.

## **Texas-Mexico Border**

The majority of the book takes place in and around the Texas-Mexican border as first the kid rides with the renegade army unit and then with Glanton's gang.



# Themes

## Death/Murder

The old west was a place where there was little law and order and murder was an everyday occurrence. In this novel, murder is not only a happenstance of the lack of law and order, but it is the business of the gang with which the kid finds himself attached. The governor of Chihuahua hires the Glanton gang to rid the state of Indians and to find the leader of a gang of Indians, a man named Gomez, and kill him for a massacre he perpetrated on a small village within the state. Glanton and his gang ride the desert looking for traces of Indians and killing every Indian they come in contact with, including an old woman who is not hurting anyone. Not only this, but they also take the scalps of these Indians in order to prove they have killed them.

There are graphic scenes within this novel where Glanton and his gang attack whole villages of Indians, killing not only the warriors who have been suspected of attacking the travelers in the area, but also the women and children. There is one scene in particular where a member of Glanton's gang kills infants he has found in this village. When the governor of Chihuahua revokes the contract he has with Glanton and issues a warrant for Glanton's arrest due to bad behavior on the part of Glanton and his men, Glanton simply signs a new contract with the governor of Sonora and continues his rampages.

Glanton and his gang's murder sprees are not limited to Indians, either. Glanton and his gang happen upon a ferry set up and decide that they want to take over the operations of the ferry in order to make money. This, among other moments of vile acts, shows that Glanton and his gang are simply criminals given the right to kill as they see fit. Glanton is a man who takes advantage of people for his own pleasure and encourages others to do the same. Therefore the theme of death/murder is not just a snapshot of an era in American history, but it is the story of a group of criminals given the legal right to do what comes natural.

## Evil

The character of the Judge in this novel seems to be the epitome of the devil walking on earth. The Judge is a man of high intelligence, oddly hairless, and cleverly evil. The Judge appears to know things before other people, can conjure up gun powder out of simple ingredients, including brimstone, and he is oddly present whenever someone goes missing or is killed. All through the novel, small children go missing from the villages the gang travels through or a child who was alive and well at the beginning of the night is found dead the next morning. There is even one scene in which the Judge is seen playing with a child and then the next minute he crushes the child's skull.



There are bad people in the world, but the Judge is not simply bad. The Judge turns on the kid on a dime, attempting to kill him after the massacre of the entire Glanton gang simply because the kid would not give up his gun to him. The Judge shows up later in the novel and although thirty years have passed, he has not aged a day. Nor has the Judge forgotten his grudge against the kid. It is as though there is something supernatural about the Judge. The theme of evil therefore surrounds the Judge throughout the novel, keeping the reader on edge even when it is not clear who the evil one is.

## Survival

A large portion of the novel's plot surrounds survival, either that of the kid or of the gang members or of their victims. The kid is shot at the very beginning of the novel, beaten and robbed, and left for dead by Indians after he joins the renegade army unit. Then the kid is put in jail, joins the Glanton gang and is separated from them in the mountains the night before the first snow fall. The kid constantly has to fight for life, to search out water in the desert and heat in the snow. It is not simply about surviving fights with Indians or the attacks the kid's gang perpetrates on the Indians. It is every day that the kid must fight for survival.

Living in the old west was difficult because of a lack of security and food. The kid and the other members of the Glanton gang often go for days without a decent meal, taking advantage of any food they are offered when they find a village to stay in for the night. Several members of the gang are shot during the course of the novel and must fight off infection from their wounds. There is one point in which the kid is traveling with a man who has a wound so severely infected that his entire arm has swollen and worms have begun to live in the flesh. There were no doctors in the desert where the men were traveling. There is also a time when the kid gets an arrow in his leg that he leaves for so long his body creates a capsule around it to keep from getting infected. A surgeon is forced to remove the arrow, leaving the kid in terrible pain.

These moments of survival are important in this novel because survival is a large part of what drives the plot development. The plot is about the kid, about his experiences killing Indians as part of the Glanton gang, but it is also about his miraculous survival in a world determined to kill a man. The kid is nearly killed dozens of times through the course of the novel, through exposure, dehydration, and wounds sustained in fights with Indians. The kid survives all of these until he meets up with the Judge again and is brutally murdered in an outhouse, thirty years after the adventures of the Glanton gang. It is an ironic turn that shifts the theme of survival off of the kid and onto the Judge, the sole survivor of the Glanton gang.

# Style

## Point of View

The point of view of this novel is dramatic or objective third person. While the main character of the novel is clearly the kid, the point of view is not through his narration but rather a distant narrator who does not attempt to tell the reader what the characters are thinking or feeling. It is an impersonal narration that often leaves the kid completely out of the story for chapters at a time, although he is the clearly the main character because when he separates from the Glanton gang, the narration follows his travels rather than the travels of the other characters.

This type of narration makes it possible for the writer to cover the exploits of many characters at once without wasting time dwelling on the subtle nuances of what makes a character human, such as thought and emotions. However, this narration can also be difficult to read because the pace of the narration tends to be quick and a reader may miss important information and be forced to go back through the previous pages in order to find the information lost. Not only this, but the reader may become confused as to the importance of each character. All novels have one or two main characters and then many minor characters. Within a novel told with this point of view, the main character may not be clear until late in the novel, or like this novel, the main character is lost in the middle of the story as the writer concentrates more on the activities of the characters as a whole rather than the individual characters.

## Setting

The majority of the novel takes place in the desert plains of Mexico in 1849-50. When the kid joins the army, they move into Mexico from Texas, hoping to kill a large majority of Mexicans in order to promote the safety and possession of South Texas. The war has been over for a year, but this army company is a renegade unit. The kid travels with this company through the heat of the Mexican desert only to face down Indians and watch many of his fellow soldiers massacred by Indians. The kid travels into Chihuahua City, Mexico, hoping to find food and water, only to be arrested. During this time the kid meets up with a man he knew in Texas and joins the Glanton gang, a group of men who have been hired to kill Indians at will and hunt down a man named Gomez. From here, the kid travels with this gang through the desert, often suffering from lack of water, and into the mountains where he encounters snow.

The setting of this novel is important because it underlines the feel of a western novel, of the atmosphere of such legendary figures as Billy the Kid and Jesse James. The setting is also important because it has an effect on the health and survival of the main character. There are several moments within the novel when the kid becomes desperate for water due to the heat and dry climate of the desert he is traveling through. There is also a chapter in which the kid is faced with survival as he walks through a



mountain range on which it has begun to snow. The kid nearly loses his toes to frostbite during this trek. Therefore, the setting is almost like another character, an antagonist that is determined to kill the kid.

## Language and Meaning

The language of the novel is at times casual and at others extremely formal. There is a character in the novel, the Judge, who is highly intelligent and clearly educated. The Judge often uses language that is complicated and difficult to understand. Also, many of the characters tend to speak in sentence structures that are unusual, inverting words in a way that is not common in today's language. Since the characters spend a large amount of time in Mexico, there is also a lot of Spanish in this novel that is not clearly translated within the text, leaving the reader to puzzle out the translations by the actions surrounding the statements.

The writer uses Spanish, large words, and odd sentence structures to give the reader a feel of what it really would have been like to be a member of the Glanton gang and to have known these people. However, it is often difficult to translate the Spanish words and to understand the sentence structure in one reading. The reader will often have to return to previous paragraphs in order to fully understand what is happening. It is a difficult style of writing, but it is worth the effort if the reader can find the story hidden in this writing style.

## Structure

The novel is written in twenty three chapters, each chapter headed by a list of words that describe the events that will take place within the novel. The story is told largely in exposition, skimming over scenes in order to offer the reader a large amount of information in a short amount of space. There is dialogue, but it too seems to be more like exposition than traditional dialogue because the writer does not use the traditional quotation marks that alert the reader to the presence of a real time conversation.

The plot is linear and straight forward. There are no sub plots, only the main plot that follows the kid on his exploits through Mexico. The writer does change his focus from the kid to the entire gang, especially the Judge and Glanton, but the kid still remains the main focus for the writer. There are times when the kid is separated from the gang and during these times the writer follows the kid rather than other members of the story. However, there are a few points when the writer follows other members of the story participating in events that the kid could not be aware of. However, all of these events have a direct consequence on the kid, therefore they do not provide a separate story line.



## Quotes

"See the child. He is pale and thin, he wears a thin and ragged linen shirt. He stokes the scullery fire." Chapter 1, pg. 3

"Five days later on the dead man's horse he followed the riders and wagons through the plaza and out of the town on the road downcountry." Chapter 4, pg. 42

"With darkness one soul rose wondrously from among the new slain dead and stole away in the moonlight." Chapter 5, pg. 55

"On to the edge of the city by the old stone aqueduct where the governor gave them his blessing and drank their health and their fortune in a simple ceremonial and they took the road upcountry." Chapter 6, pg. 80

"Now a member of the company seated there seemed to weigh the judge's words and some turned to look at the black. He stood an uneasy honoree and at length he stepped back from the firelight and the juggler rose and made a motion with the cards, sweeping them in a fan before him and then proceeding along the perimeter past the boots of the men with the cards outheld as if they would find their own subject." Chapter 7, pg. 83

"They paused without the cantina and pooled their coins and Toadvine pushed aside the dried cowhide that hung for a door and they entered a place where all was darkness and without definition." Chapter 8, pg. 100

"The Americans might have traded for some of the meat but they carried no tantamount goods and the disposition to exchange was foreign to them." Chapter 9, pg. 121

"For the next two weeks they would ride by night, they would make no fire. They had struck the shoes from their horses and filled the nailholes in with clay and those who still had tobacco used their pouches to spit in and they slept in caves and on bare stone. They rode through the tracks of their dismounting and they buried their stool like cats and they barely spoke at all."

Chapter 12, pg. 151

"It was a lone tree burning on the desert. A heraldic tree that the passing storm had left afire." Chapter 15, pg. 215

"Hack away you mean red nigger, he said, and the old man raised the axe and split the head of John Joel Glanton to the thrapple." Chapter 19, pg. 275

"Toadvine and the kid fought a running engagement upriver through the shore bracken with arrows clattering through the cane all about them." Chapter 20, pg. 277





"He reached into the little cove and touched her arm. She moved slightly, her whole body, light and rigid. She weighed nothing. She was just a dried shell , and she had been dead in that place for years." Chapter 22, pg. 315

"The judge was seated upon the closet. He was naked and rose up smiling and gathered him in his arms against his immense and terrible flesh and shot the wooden barlatch home behind him." Chapter 23, pg. 333



## Topics for Discussion

Who is the kid? How old is the kid? What is the importance of his character? Is the kid a good person or a bad one? Does the kid participate in the carnage that the rest of the gang participates in? Why or why not? Can you imagine doing the things the kid does at his age?

Who is the Judge? What is the importance of his character? Why does he insist that he cannot die? Do you believe this is true? Why does he kill the kid at the end of the novel?

Why is the Glanton gang hired to kill Indians? Is what they are doing a good thing? What have the Indians done to deserve this treatment?

Discuss Gomez. Why is the Glanton gang so interested in killing Gomez? Does Gomez deserve his death? How is Gomez any different in his actions from Glanton and his gang?

In most every town the Glanton gang stops in a child goes missing. Who do you think is doing these crimes? Why does Glanton do nothing to stop it? What do these crimes say about the perpetrator?

Discuss the violence in this novel. Is the violence too vivid for a novel of this type? Is it gratuitous or is the violence warranted? Do you think the violence takes away from the story or does it enrich the story?

Discuss the basic writing of this novel. Is this a novel in the true sense or is it more of an epic prose? What is the difference between novel and epic prose? If it is epic prose, is there a story within it?